

LAWN & GARDEN RETAILER HEADLINES

Compiled by Catherine Evans

MANAGEMENT CLINIC DRAWS HIGH NUMBERS

ANLA's annual Management Clinic brought nearly 800 green industry owners and managers to Louisville, Ky., January 22-25. The Management Clinic is dedicated to developing the business skills of those professionals in garden retail, landscape contracting, growing and landscape distribution who represent the future of this industry.

The 2004 Clinic opened with two intensive and innovative programs for garden retailers, landscape designers and sales professionals: Garden Center University (GCU) and the Landscape Sales Master Class. GCU, an ANLA members-only program, taught by Ian Baldwin, represents a mini-MBA program for garden centers with a five-"semester", two-year program. At Clinic, GCU initiated the Class of '06 and recognized

its inaugural graduating class, which held a graduation ceremony in Florida January 15. More than 50 landscape contractors took advantage of the Master Class in Sales offered by Jud Griggs of JP Horizons.

The event kicked off Friday morning with highest honors. Kathryn Pufahl of Beds and Borders, Laurel, N.Y., was posthumously honored with the ANLA Garden Communicator Award. ANLA presents this award annually to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to public understanding and appreciation of plants and landscape beautification through popular media.

Judy Sharpton of Growing Places Marketing speaks of the unique perspective that Pufahl offered to ornamental horticulture. According to Sharpton, she looked at garden product from the point of view of the consumer and reformed its presentation to reflect that understanding. "Kathy changed the way the industry presents its product. She created a better package, and her product line will continue to represent that as long as there are plants." Beds & Borders remains in business under the leadership of Pufahl's husband, Kevin.

Growers and distributors responded enthusiastically to the

continued on page 10



Left to right: ANLA Clinic programming committee member Carolyn McGill of A. McGill and Son; Closing keynote speaker, Jeff Hammond; Co-Chair of ANLA Clinic programming committee Debi Drescher of Stauffers of Kissel Hill;

Garden Ridge Files Chapter 11

The Garden Ridge Corporation announced that it and its subsidiaries have filed to reorganize under Chapter 11 with the primary goal of renegotiating store lease agreements and certain other arrangements. The company filed the petition with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware.

Over the last nine months, Garden Ridge has successfully implemented initiatives designed to improve profitability and return to a merchant-driven strategy, which emphasizes a wide variety of home décor and crafts, a breadth selection within each category and savings.

Garden Ridge said it has been achieving improving results, with same-store sales increasing 5.4 percent in December 2003 and 2.6 percent in January 2004. However, based on extensive analysis of this lease agreement, the company believes it is paying significantly over-market rates at several stores, which has affected the profitability of those stores and the overall liquidity of the company. Chapter 11 provides Garden Ridge with the vehicle to improve liquidity and reject uneconomic leases.

Additionally, the company said that its primary shareholder, Three Cities Research, is in discussion regarding an additional investment in Garden Ridge.

According to Jack Lewis, president and chief merchandiser officer, "Our investors and lenders recognized that we have a fundamentally sound business plan. Because our restructuring is focused primarily on renegotiating our store lease agreements, we expect to successfully emerge from Chapter 11 in 90-120 days."

Garden Ridge said it would seek to close four stores that do not fit into its strategy in the next several weeks. There will be three stores closed in the metro Houston area and one in Cincinnati.

The company said it could close additional stores during the course of its reorganization proceedings. However, Garden Ridge is committed to reopening stores in every market it is in today and entering new markets as well, providing it can find stores that fit its profile and negotiate fair market lease terms. It is currently soliciting new landlords to find prospective sites to open new locations and continues to serve its customers.

AHMA FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST REED EXHIBITIONS

The American Hardware Manufacturers Association (AHMA) has accused the show's former management firm of illegally inflating costs for exhibitors, falsely padding registration figures for a competing show to be held this year and violating AHMA's trademark, according to a recently filed federal lawsuit.

The suit, by AHMA, was brought against Reed Exhibitions. The case was filed in federal district court in Chicago on December 30, 2003.

Since the filing of the complaint and at print time, Reed Exhibitions has not denied the allegations of cost shifting, kickbacks, inflated exhibitor and attendee information, or trademark infringement. In fact, spokespersons for Reed Exhibitions have been quoted admitting to receiving freebies (*Chicago Tribune*, January 3rd edition) and inflating Reed's exhibitor list with undecided participants (*Meeting News*,

December 8, 2003), and Reed has also removed AHMA's trademarks from its Web site in response to the lawsuit according to a press release sent by AHMA.

From 1977-2003, AHMA and Reed produced the National Hardware Show in Chicago. The two organizations split last year, with AHMA accusing Reed of cost shifting by concealing revenue it received from the shows general contractors without passing the reductions on to exhibitors. The parties reached a separation agreement early last year that allowed AHMA and Reed to produce competing hardware shows in 2004, but required the parties to abide by existing agreements concerning the show held in August 2003.

Both sides are currently planning hardware shows. The AHMA show will take place in Chicago from April 18-20, 2004, and Reed will hold its show in Las Vegas May 10-12, 2004.



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HEADLINES

ARS Names Knock Out as First Members' Choice Award

The American Rose Society (ARS) has selected the Knock Out rose as the first recipient of its newly created Member's Choice award. Hybridized by William J. Radler of Greenfield, Wis., this striking red standout was introduced by The Conard-Pyle Company in 2000.

Knock Out was selected by ARS members after an extensive review of all roses introduced in the last three years. Members rated the roses on garden performance and ease of maintenance and gave Knock Out the highest score.

This is the first year ARS has awarded the Members' Choice, but its 20,000 members have been reviewing and reporting on new roses for years. ARS created the award to inform people about roses that are easy to grow and beautiful in the garden.

"That's why Knock Out was the perfect choice for the first ARS Members' Choice," says Marilyn Wellan, president of ARS. "It stood out heads above the rest in all parts of the country, including hot and cold climates."

Wellan says the rose society is looking for the same qualities in a rose that the general public wants. "Roses don't have to be hard to grow," she says. "Knock Out requires little to no attention and is a great landscape bush, almost always in bloom and disease resistant. It's impressive either as a single specimen or in a mass planting, and it's red, and red captures our attention."

Knock Out blooms continuously from May until a hard frost, is clothed in lush foliage, is disease and insect resistant, and shows an amazing adaptability to a broad range of soil types. It does well in heat and humidity and even blooms well in drought, and blooms in full sun and even partial shaded.



P. ALLEN SMITH BOOK SELECTED AS YEAR'S BEST

P. Allen Smith's book, *P. Allen Smith Garden Home: Creating Gardens for Everyday Living*, has been selected as one of the year's best gardening books by *Fine Gardening* magazine contributing editor C. Colston Burrell in the February 2004 issue.

According to the P. Allen Smith Web site (www.pallensmith.com), Burrell's review says, "TV personality P. Allen Smith's first book offers practical and achievable ideas for those learning to personalize their gardens. Whether your home turf is expansive or intimate, formal or naturalistic, you will benefit from this philosophical book. From the framework to the finishing touches, Smith instructs and inspires the reader." Upon learning of the selection, Smith responded by saying, "I am honored to have my book endorsed by one of the country's leading gardening magazines. It is gratifying to know that my book, in which I encourage homeowners to create beautiful and livable outdoor spaces that blend with their homes' interiors, has been so well received."

This year, Allen's book was also recognized for its excellence when he was selected as one of 80 authors invited to participate in the National Book Festival hosted by the Library of Congress and First Lady Laura Bush on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

FRANKS CEO RESIGNS

In a surprising announcement, Bruce Dale has decided to resign as CEO of Franks Nursery, after nine months at the position, due to rising concerns that the Franks turnaround plan is failing according to the *Detroit News*.

Dale is the company's third chief executive in three years. He also stepped down from his position on the board of directors.

According to the *Detroit News*, Franks increased its revolving credit line by \$25 million to \$45 million and hired a management-consulting firm to help the company regain its cash flow. The company emerged from Chapter 11 in May 2002. Franks had to close 87 of its stores and now operates 170 in states from its original number of 257 stores in 15 states.

As far as earnings go, the company lost \$10.5 million during the first three quarters of its fiscal year because of the tough competition they are currently facing with stores like Lowe's and Home Depot as well as the number of independent retailers in the country.

Within the last several months, Franks had been making the transition from being a nursery and craft chain to a garden specialty store, taking away all of the crafts and focusing on live and silk plants, gifts and outdoor furniture, and revamped some stores. Analysts saw Dale as major in the repositioning plan according to the

continued on page 12

AHMA Hardware Show 2004

IT'S A LOT MORE THAN HARDWARE

AHMA HARDWARE SHOW
 McCormick Place
 Chicago, IL
 April 18-20, 2004

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MARCH

12-21 Hicks Nurseries
 14th Annual Flower and Garden Show
 Westbury, N.Y.
 (516) 997-8545

15-16 SAF Congressional Action Days
 Washington, D.C.
 (703) 836-8700
www.safnow.org

27-April 9 California Pack Trials
 Throughout California
 Contact breeder companies

30-April 2 GCA/Lawn & Garden Retailer Pack Trials Tour
 Throughout California
www.gardencentersofamerica.org

APRIL

18-20 AHMA Hardware Show
 Chicago, Ill.
www.ahmahardwareshow.com

22-28 High Point Market
 High Point, N.C.
 (336) 888-3700
www.ihfc.com

MAY

10-12 National Hardware Show
 Las Vegas, Nev.
www.nationalhardwareshow.com

16-19 National Stationery Show
 New York, N.Y.
www.nationalstationeryshow.com

JUNE

14-16 National Lawn and Garden Show
 Denver, Colo.
 (888) 316-0226
www.nlgshow.com

16-19 ANLA Retail Roadshow
 New York, N.Y.
 (202) 789-2900
www.anla.org

16-19 Super Floral Show
 Charlotte, N.C.
 (312) 332-4650
www.superfloralshow.com

23-26 Southeast Greenhouse Conference
 Greenville, S.C.
 (877) 927-2775
www.sgcta.org

25-29 Dallas Int'l. Gift & Home Accessories Market
 Dallas, Texas
 (888) 231-7024
www.glmshows.com/dallas

27-30 GCA Summer Tour
 Williamsburg, Va.
 (888) 648-6463
www.gardensentersofamerica.org

JULY

5-8: Perennial Plant Symposium & Trade Show
 New York, N.Y.
 (614) 771-8431
www.perennialplant.org

10-14: OFA 2004 Short Course and Trade Show
 Columbus, Ohio
 (614) 487-1117
www.ofa.org

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In addition to the See-Bee House, Cougar Ridge Farm manufactures nesting blocks and paper tube nesting systems for mason bees. We also sell live, dormant mason bees through February.



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Write in 787

HEADLINES

"Management Clinic" continued from page 6

increased programming targeted specifically at their business needs. Particularly well attended by growers, was a session presented by Mauricio Velasquez of the Diversity Training Group. Velasquez, an ANLA certified consultant, led a no-holds-barred discussion on effectively managing a Hispanic workforce. John Spence brought his Fortune-500-tested message to a record turnout from the landscape distribution community that tripled in size from 2003. The 2005 Management Clinic is scheduled for February 3-6.

PW SPONSORS NEW GARDENING HIGH-DEFINITION SHOW

Chambers Productions, a television and film production facility in Oregon, announced completion of a new gardening series entitled "Smart Gardening." The show is a 30-minute, high-definition magazine-style program that will take viewers across North America to explore and enhance the joy and beauty of gardening. Thirteen episodes begin airing in March 2004 and will be carried nationwide by public television stations. The show is sponsored by Proven Winners.

The host of "Smart Gardening" is Emmy award winning broadcast journalist Asha Blake, (former host of "Later Today" on NBC, co-anchor of ABC's "World News This Morning" and host of the syndicated "Life Moments").

"We are sponsoring 'Smart Gardening' because it is a cutting edge format for gardening programs," said Marshall Dirks, director of marketing for Proven Winners. "The show is unique in content and appearance and will bring a fresh, instructive and interesting approach to gardening nationwide."

Many "Smart Gardening" segments are shot on location to take viewers to places ranging from Canada to the East and West coasts of the United States with detail only high definition can bring to television. Additionally, the show features three unique sets in the garden studio.

Following strict public television guidelines, "Smart Gardening" con-

tent is verified by experts in concordance with the Cooperative Extension Services of the Land Grant University System. Professors in horticulture from these universities are employed as content consultants, guiding the selections of topics.

In acknowledgement of Proven Winners' sponsorship, two 15-second on-air credits discussing Proven Winners plants will air at the beginning and end of each episode. Proven Winners' sponsorship credit will also be broadcast in high definition.

RETAIL SALES TAKE A NICE JUMP IN JANUARY

Despite the extreme cold weather and the continued redemption of gift cards, the New Year started off with a bang for United States retailers. January retail sales released by the U.S. Commerce Department show that total retail sales, excluding motor vehicles, rose 0.9 percent seasonally adjusted for the month and 6.8 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

"Consumers hit the stores in January to redeem gift cards and take advantage of deep discounts on winter merchandise," said National Retail Federation (NRF) president and CEO Tracy Mullin. "Though the first month of the year is traditionally slow, retailers should be pleased that consumers are still spending after the holiday season."

Seasonable weather boosted demand for anything warm, which showed in sales at apparel stores. Clothing and clothing accessories stores experienced very strong growth in January, with sales rising 2.9 percent seasonally adjusted month-to-month and up 9.5 percent unadjusted for the year. The Super Bowl boosted sales at electronics and appliances stores with sales rising 0.1 percent adjusted from December and 11.2 percent unadjusted over January 2003. Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores also performed well with sales rising 1.6 percent adjusted for the month and up 3.7 percent over last year. NRF forecasts that GAFS sales will increase 5.0 percent in 2004. ♦

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HEADLINES

"Franks" continued from page 7

Detroit News. However, the company is saying that Franks is still going forth with its growth plan in anticipation for the upcoming spring season. But according to the *Detroit News*, many people in the industry are very wary as to the fate of Franks.

New product lines in the lawn and garden category are planned to be introduced at Franks. The company also announced on Wednesday that it has a new credit agreement and they have hired Abacus Advisors LLC to help in the operation turnaround.

OFA MARKS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Floriculture industry professionals from around the world will celebrate "75 years of planting the seeds of knowledge" at the 2004 OFA Short Course July 10-14, 2004 in Columbus, Ohio.

Professionals from all segments of floriculture meet to get new ideas, research products and visit with company representatives.

This year, the trade show will host nearly 600 exhibitors and more than 1,300 booths that will showcase their products, plant materials and equipment. The trade show continues to grow each year, with at least 11 countries representing all areas of the industry.

Archie Griffin, The Ohio State University alumnus and one of the top college-football running backs of all time, will be the keynote speaker at the Short Course on Sunday, July 11 at 6 p.m. Griffin will be discussing "The 3 D's of Success" — desire, dedication and determination. He will also include stories from his high school days and his times with Woody Hayes.

The 2004 Short Course will also offer educational seminars, hands-on workshops, tours and interactive sessions from several areas of the industry:

Greenhouse growers. The sessions will be presented in three areas: greenhouse production basics, greenhouse advanced topics, and disease and pest management. The sessions will include topics such as vegetative and seeded annuals, perennials, poinsettias, potted and bedding plants, media, nutrition, irrigation, lighting, chemical growth regulation and container production.

Michigan State University's College of Knowledge Level I and II courses will be offered on Friday, July 9 and Saturday, July 10. The 2004 grower study tour — "Extension Reloaded: A Diagnostic Tour" — will visit several locations in the Columbus and Cincinnati areas.

Garden centers. A one-day workshop on the future of garden retailing will be presented on Saturday, July 10. Garden center operators and employees will also be able to tour several Ohio garden centers. Other educational seminars throughout the week will focus on merchandising, marketing and customer relations. There will also be an idea exchange to discuss making a profit on woody ornamentals, controlling insects and updating the garden center.

Retail florists. A design contest sponsored by Teleflora will be held on Sunday, July 11, as well as hands-on workshops that will focus on color, high-style looks at a low cost and gift baskets. Other sessions will include tricks of the trade, pricing issues and a history of floriculture.

Interior plantscape. A technician workshop will discuss media, insect/disease diagnostics, aglaonema varieties and color programs. An interior plantscape management workshop will feature secrets for interiorscapers, questions of growers and wholesalers, safety in the workplace and effective training.

Management and marketing. The series will feature presentations and idea exchanges on topics such as point-of-sale systems, customer relations, leadership skills and time management. There will also be educational sessions focusing on working with employees more effectively, increasing profits, marketing to and maintaining customers, and dealing with the generation gap.

Industry newcomer outreach. The sessions will include ideas on starting a new business, family business hints and being a good employee/supervisor.

OFA Short Course attendees will also be able to review new products and varieties displays, attend the OFA Short Course reception, visit the OFA showcase, participate in the FIRST fund-raising activities and shop at the OFA bookstore and apparel shop. ☞

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